



# Washington Weekly Brief

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## On the Hill

Here's what we're tracking this week for EUCOM.

### *Bills of Interest:*

#### **HR 2003** - Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007

- This bill would encourage and facilitate consolidation of security, human rights, democracy, and economic freedom in Ethiopia. This would include counter terrorism and counter narcotics efforts.
- This bill was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.
- This bill was received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, after passage in the House on October 3.

#### **HR 2228** - Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Bill

- Closely related to HR 2003 this bill would also encourage the development of Ethiopia while also implementing counter terrorism and counter narcotics efforts.
- This bill was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

#### **HR 2446** - Afghanistan Freedom and Security Support Act of 2007

- This bill provides funding for programs to stabilize Afghanistan and counter the drug trade.
- This bill passed the House and was sent to the Senate, which referred it to the Committee on Foreign Relations. Star Print ordered July 17, 2007.

#### **S 3001** - National Defense Authorization Act of 2009 (House version)

- This bill authorizes military activities and programs and DoD-wide programs for 2009.
- The bill was passed by both House and Senate committees, and sent to the White House for Presidential signature September 27, 2008.
- Became Public Law No 110-417 with President Bush's signature on October 14<sup>th</sup>.

#### **HR 2638** - Department of Defense Appropriations Act of 2009

- This bill authorizes Department of Defense activities and programs for FY 2009.
- The bill was attached to the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2008 to continue appropriations for Department of Defense activities and programs that would be covered by the regular fiscal year 2009 appropriations bills.

### *Hearings of Interest:*

There are no hearings of interest scheduled for this week.

## INSIDE THE BELTWAY

Now nearly a week past the election, the confetti is starting to settle...but in the halls of Congress and the rooms of the executive branch, things are just starting to heat up. And for those who thought the season of political punditry passed on Tuesday the 4<sup>th</sup>, they are highly mistaken. Post-election suspense mounts with every headline. In a move that has generated a storm of speculation and analysis, President-elect Barack Obama's first cabinet nominee accepted; Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-IL) decided to leave his position as House Democrat Caucus Chairman. Caucus chairman is the 4<sup>th</sup> ranked majority position in the House behind Speaker, Majority Leader and Whip. Many in Washington feel that Emanuel's acceptance of the position is a sign that perhaps the agenda of the Obama administration may not be as politically cordial or bipartisan as some have thought; with Emanuel as Chief of Staff, an Obama Administration may take a hard-line approach on a number of issues. Many have thought that having Emanuel

as Chief of Staff may be in order to strengthen ties between the White House and Congress. For example, even though Democrats hold a considerable majority in the House, divisions with the Democrat Party, particularly with the conservative Blue Dog Caucus, on fiscal issues may make it difficult for the Obama Administration to get certain spending issues through. Emanuel's hill connections could be a last-resort tool for the administration to push through high-profile measures that may have stalled in Congress. Others claim that as ruthless as Emanuel is, he is a shrewd deal-maker who, despite his notoriously high-partisan nature, has a record of achieving outcomes. In a Sunday morning TV news interview, Emanuel deflected some of these charges and claimed that under Obama leadership, business would still be conducted in a bipartisan fashion and it would be the President who will dictate the tone of the administration. Only time will tell. Other landmark shifts upon the Hill have transpired as well. The most notable of these was the decision last Friday made by 90 year old Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV), to step down from his long held position as Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Citing health issues as one of the main reasons behind the move, Byrd will be replaced by Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI), a decorated WWII veteran, who was first elected to the Senate in 1963. Even though Senator Inouye will replace Byrd, he will likely retain his seat as Chairman of Senate Defense Appropriations Sub-committee as well. The effects from Byrd's decision may ripple even farther. With Inouye's takeover of Senate Appropriations, his chair seat on the Commerce, Science and Transportation could go to Senator John Rockefeller (D-WV). Rockefeller's move would result in a chair vacancy on the Senate Select Intelligence Committee. In turn, this seat could then be filled by Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA). With committee assignments and cabinet nominations yet to be announced or accepted, much is still up in the air. On an additional note, with Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) as the Vice President-elect, his seat as Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee may be filled by Senator John Kerry (D-MA). That however, may not happen if Senator Kerry is offered and accepts the cabinet position of Secretary of State. If Kerry moves into the Obama administration, the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee may go to Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI). The intra-party battle between Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Joe Lieberman (D-CT) continued this week as well. Because of his support for Senator McCain in the election, Lieberman could lose his chairmanship of the Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee; as of Monday November 10<sup>th</sup>, his fate had not been decided. All in all, for the next couple of months, lawmakers will be playing musical chairs...and the songs have just started to play. TCG will keep an ear tuned to the noise.

## TOPICS OF INTEREST

A late October operation between joint U.S. and Colombian forces has added an important dimension to the relationship between transnational criminality and international terrorism. Most notably, this case did not strictly involve the FARC or any of the other usual suspects, but instead also focuses on the radical Shiite, Iranian-backed group Hezbollah. This case is significant not only for exposing a new link between the drug trade and a prominent terrorist group but because of its greater geographic implications as well. Hezbollah's criminal connections in South America have long been in existence but this is one of the rare cases where a substantive crime-terror link has come to public light. A two-year investigation, known as Operation Titan, started as a money-laundering probe but rapidly expanded as evidence began to collect. With the arrests of at least 130 suspects, Colombian forces, cooperating with the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, dismantled a hybrid criminal/terror cell in Colombia that had been responsible for distributing cocaine to markets in the U.S., Europe and the Middle East. The group was led by Shukri Mahmud Harb, a Lebanese national who had been living in Colombia and was responsible for channeling considerable sums of laundered money to Hezbollah. Credible sources indicate that the Harb group had close trade connections with cocaine cartels, drug-running guerillas and Hezbollah operatives; drug shipments were moved through Panama, Venezuela Guatemala, the U.S. and parts of Europe and the Middle East. Drug profits were discovered to have been laundered in a variety of schemes that included legitimate businesses, Hong Kong front companies and shady real-estate purchases in Africa and Canada. Evidence

was gathered from 700,000 monitored conversations with over 370 wiretaps. Hezbollah has long been involved in a variety of criminal schemes in order to support both its terror operations and political activities. That fact that this group had been active in the northern Andean regions of South America is striking. Most reports on the South America/Hezbollah crime subject have typically focused on the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina. With loose import duties, varying tax rates and a diverse mixture of cultures, the TBA is well documented as a sweltering, swarming beehive of drug-smuggling, money-laundering, contraband traffic and extremist fundraising. Interestingly, according to a report from the Jamestown Foundation, the man responsible for much of Hezbollah's operations in the TBA was the notorious Imad Mugniyeh, the Hezbollah security chief killed in February of 2008. Known as "the Boss," Mugniyeh was largely responsible for drug trafficking and other criminal activities in the TBA as well. As is widely known, Hezbollah is a dominant political/terror force in the Levant, responsible for numerous attacks, including the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut. The group has far-reaching influence, a well-oiled global fundraising apparatus and a recognized history of participation in organized crime. Its primary location and activities in the Eastern Mediterranean place the group in the center of a growing locus of transnational criminality, terror-migration and teetering Sectarian instability. Interestingly, the group is also reported to have a considerable network of terror operatives and criminal activities in parts of Africa as well. How these African-based Hezbollah satellites connect to groups in South America or the Mediterranean rim remains somewhat underreported. However, considering the role that Africa plays in the trans-Atlantic/European cocaine trade, Hezbollah cells may be playing a large part...particularly in light of these new cocaine trade links in the Andean region. Hezbollah's purchase of property in Africa is also intriguing and could serve multiple purposes. While real-estate may be a way for Hezbollah to launder money, the land purchased could also be used for longer-term operations; bases for training and African criminal operations immediately come to mind. Hezbollah is already reported to be actively purchasing real-estate in Lebanon in order to build bases of regional, military and political support. The Hezbollah-Iran-Venezuela picture is rife with dots that beg connecting. The role of Hezbollah as a proxy army in Iranian-backed schemes and increasingly cordial relations between Iran, Venezuela and other South American governments present a healthy dose of geopolitical food for thought. So far, mutual military exchanges, training and exercises, arms-sales and energy agreements have been the most visible examples of Persian-Latin cooperation. Suspicions that Venezuela actively profits from the drug trade have been long held and evidence from Operation Titan may indicate that Iran, through its Hezbollah proxies, could be directly or indirectly benefitting from the cocaine trade as well. Interestingly, in what could arguably be tactical deception, both Venezuela and Iran often go out of their way to demonstrate their commitment to counter-drug efforts. Venezuela's high-profile but convenient busts and Iran's grandiose public executions of drug traffickers illustrate the point. These problems may also be stretching into other like-minded Andean states as well; Bolivia's demand that the DEA vacate the country within three months serves as the most recent example. Needless to say, the results of Operation Titan make for stimulating thought and discussion. And if not for anything else, this set of events only reinforces the importance of drug money to all global underground terror and criminal groups. TCG will continue to report on these trends and issues in greater depth.

To view recent articles on Operation Titan, please access the following links:

**Colombian Cocaine Ring Linked to Hezbollah**

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-cocainering22-2008oct22,0,384200.story>

**Latin American Narco-Dollars Financing Hezbollah's Growing Establishment**

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374525>

## Selected News for EUCOM

- [British Trio are Charged Over 700M Drugs Haul](#)
- [French Court Jails 4 over Iraq 'Jihad' Plans](#)
- [In Latin America, Leftist Leaders Evict U.S. Drug Warriors](#)

## The Lighter Side

### Quote of the Week

*"There is much to be said for not saying much."*  
-Frank Tyger

*"An Englishman is a person who does things because they have been done before. An American is a person who does things because they haven't been done before."*  
~Mark Twain

### For Those Who've Served

*In commemoration of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Armistice Day and for all those who've worn or currently wear the uniform, Happy Veteran's Day. Happy 233<sup>rd</sup> Birthday to all Marines as well! Semper Fi!*

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